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Department of Children and Families Receives Major Grant from Milwaukee Philanthropy Group

As Foster Care Month begins, the Milwaukee Child Welfare Philanthropy Group has granted \$50,000 to the Department of Children and Families to advance quality and performance of the foster care system in Milwaukee County. The resources will be used to engage a nationally renowned foster care expert to conduct an assessment of current foster care placements and will provide funding for the resulting foster parent recruitment and retention plan.

"This is a tremendous contribution and investment in Milwaukee's foster children," DCF Secretary Reggie Bicha said. "I cannot thank the members of the Child Welfare Philanthropy Group enough for this act of generosity and commitment to Milwaukee's foster children."

With a portion of the grant, the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare will contract with Paul Vincent, a national foster care expert with the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group. Vincent will review placement practices at BMCW and make recommendations on how to best fulfill the needs of foster children.

The resulting strategic, targeted plan will help channel work currently underway by BMCW to increase the number of quality foster homes, reduce the number of placements per foster child and improve overall the experience and outcomes of foster children. Grant resources will also support implementation of the plan.

"Making sure children are safe and secure is a responsibility we all share," Philanthropy Group Chair Linda Davis said. "We are very excited to have this opportunity to help the Department build a better future for Milwaukee's most vulnerable kids."

In 2007 there were 2,762 children in out-of-home care in Milwaukee County and the state has a goal to increase the number of foster homes by approximately 25%.

"As a former foster parent, I understand the challenges and the joys of bringing a foster child into your home," stated Secretary Bicha. "Right now in Milwaukee there are loving homes that would be the perfect places for children in need. This strategic process will help us more effectively recruit and retain caring foster parents willing to open their hearts and homes to a child."

The Milwaukee Child Welfare Philanthropy Group is a community organization made up of non-profit agencies across the county. For information about becoming a foster parent, please visit the DCF website: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/progserv/fosterparent.HTM>.

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